

## GVV Pillar 1: Values

*GVV Pillar 1: Values* introduces the first principle of “Giving Voice to Values” (GVV). Citing research, Mary Gentile suggests a small set of values, or hyper-norms, that are universally shared, such as honesty, respect, responsibility, fairness, and compassion (*Giving Voice to Values*, p. 30). Framing values conflicts in the workplace and in our wider lives in terms of hyper-norms can help us find common ground with others. We see that many conflicts actually arise from differences of opinion about how to uphold shared values, especially in diverse and challenging contexts, rather than about what values ought to be upheld. In enacting our values, it is important not to assume too little – or too much – commonality with the viewpoints of others.

To learn more about values systems and how they vary from culture to culture, watch *Fundamental Moral Unit* and *All is Not Relative*. For complimentary approaches to GVV that also offer methods for voicing values and making ethical decisions, watch the four-part *Being Your Best Self* videos, which include *Part 1: Moral Awareness*, *Part 2: Moral Decision Making*, *Part 3: Moral Intent*, and *Part 4: Moral Action*. To learn about pervasive social and organizational biases that inhibit voicing values, watch *Moral Muteness* and *Moral Myopia*. To discover how voicing values can contribute to professional and personal success, watch *Moral Imagination*.

The case studies on this page illustrate different ways in which individuals or groups give voice to their values. “Pao & Gender Bias” examines the debate Ellen Pao generated in the venture capital and tech industries when she filed a lawsuit against her employer on grounds of gender discrimination. “Freedom of Speech on Campus” explores how, in the wake of racially motivated offenses at Yale and the University of Missouri, student protesters voiced their values and sparked debate over the roles of free speech, deliberation, and tolerance on campus. “Defending Freedom of Tweets?” takes a look at the backlash Pittsburgh Steelers running back Rashard Mendenhall received from fans after he tweeted a criticism of the celebration of the assassination of Osama Bin Laden. “Full Disclosure: Manipulating Donors” examines the difficult position a student intern was in and how she struggled to voice her values.

Terms related to this video and defined in our ethics glossary include: altruism, ethics, in-group/out-group, integrity, justice, moral absolutism, morals, moral pluralism, moral relativism, morals, prosocial behavior, social contract theory, values, and virtue ethics.

### The GVV Approach

The “Giving Voice to Values” (GVV) video series summarizes the key points of *Giving Voice to Values: How to Speak Your Mind When You Know What’s Right*, written by Mary Gentile with support from the Yale School of Management and the Aspen Institute. The GVV videos may be watched individually or sequentially. The series will be most useful if viewed in its entirety and with the introductory video.



GVV was created for business ethics programs, but its lessons are broad and apply to all professionals in every field including fine arts, liberal arts, communication studies, social and natural sciences, engineering, education, social work, and medicine. The GVV series can serve as a springboard for further discussion of ethics and values as they pertain to individuals' professional and personal lives.

GVV identifies the many ways that individuals can – and do – voice their values in the workplace. It teaches people how to build the “moral muscles” necessary to do so, and details the strategies people can use to find the motivation, skill, and confidence to “give voice to their values.”

The goal of GVV is to act consistently with our most deeply held convictions about right and wrong. Research and experience demonstrate that values conflicts will inevitably occur in our professional and personal lives. So, when what we believe and want to accomplish seems to be in opposition to the demands of others (peers, supervisors, organizations, etc.), the ability to successfully voice our values and navigate these differences is crucial. This is the starting point for the GVV curriculum.

GVV consists of seven principles, or pillars, that represent ways of thinking about values, our identity, and our own capabilities. The seven pillars of GVV are: *Values, Choice, Normalization, Purpose, Self-Knowledge & Alignment, Voice, and Reasons & Rationalizations*. Each video in the GVV series introduces and explains one of the GVV pillars.

Gentile also describes the factors that affect ethical behavior and offers techniques for resisting unethical actions. Ultimately, the curriculum helps people build and practice the skills they need to recognize, speak, and act on their values effectively when conflicts arise.

The GVV approach includes:

- How a leader raises values-based issues in an effective manner – what she/he needs to do to be heard and how to correct an existing course of action when necessary.
- An emphasis on self-assessment and a focus on individual strengths when looking for a way to align one's individual sense of purpose with that of an organization.
- Opportunities to construct and practice responses to frequently heard reasons and rationalizations for not acting on one's values.
- Positive examples of times when people have found ways to voice and thereby implement their values in the workplace.
- Practice in providing peer feedback and coaching.

### **Discussion questions: G.V.V. Pillar 1 - Values**

1. BEFORE viewing the video, you may wish to poll students with the following questions:

When it comes to values conflicts, most folks share the same values.

*Strongly Agree   Somewhat Agree   Not Sure   Somewhat Disagree   Strongly Disagree*

Everyone has a different set of values so it is very difficult to communicate about them.

*Strongly Agree   Somewhat Agree   Not Sure   Somewhat Disagree   Strongly Disagree*

It doesn't matter what others think, because I know I'm right and I will stand up for my values.

*Strongly Agree   Somewhat Agree   Not Sure   Somewhat Disagree   Strongly Disagree*

2. AFTER viewing the video, you may wish to re-visit the polling questions above and discuss whether participants have any new insights.
3. Is agreeing on a set of shared values enough to resolve differences in cultural understandings of those values?
4. What are some examples of cases in which appealing to common values can help smooth over differences of opinion?
5. Think of someone whom you think of as VERY different from yourself. When have you agreed with them about something significant? What values do you share with them? What made it possible/easier for you to find agreement with them in this instance?
6. Have you ever worked across cultures, or lived in a culture different from the one you were raised in? If so, have you encountered significant differences or conflicts? If so, what were they based upon? For example, actual differences in individual "values?" Differences in the enabling context, such as the level of legal enforcement or regulatory oversight? Other causes? Have you seen examples of workable approaches for addressing these differences?

A video on this topic can be watched here:

<http://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=48267765>

A written case of this phenomenon, "Not an Option Even To Consider (A)," can be found at the [Giving Voice to Values Curriculum](#) website.

### **Additional Resources**

Giving Voice to Values case studies, curriculum, and additional teaching pedagogy are available at no cost to educators at the [Giving Voice to Values Curriculum](#) website.

Further details about the "Values" pillar may be found in Chapter Two of *Giving Voice to Values*, "Values: What They Are and What They Are Not."

For a discussion of the "GVV Starting Assumptions," see Chapter One of *Giving Voice to Values*, "Giving Voice to Our Values: The Thought Experiment."

A summary of the seven pillars of GVV may be downloaded here: [An Action Framework for Giving Voice To Values – “The To-Do List.”](#)

For further discussion of the GVV approach, see Mary Gentile’s article published in *Organization Management Journal*, “[Values-Driven Leadership Development: Where We Have Been and Where We Could Go.](#)”

Gentile, Mary C. (2010). [Giving Voice to Values: How to Speak Your Mind When You Know What's Right.](#) New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

### Transcript of Narration

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“When the subject of “values” is raised, we will often hear two conflicting responses. On the one hand, some folks will say: “Well, values are entirely relative. It depends on your family, your religion, your culture, your politics, etc. There is no clear right or wrong because everyone sees the issues differently.” On the other hand, some folks will say: “Of course, there are clear values and I know what they are and it really doesn’t matter what you say or think.”

Both of these positions – the entirely relativistic and the entirely absolutist perspective – make it difficult to have a real, meaningful and constructive conversation about how to enact values in our careers and our wider lives.

The First Pillar of GVV acknowledges that while cultural, political and religious differences do exist, research suggests that there still are a set of widely shared, universal “hyper-norms” — values that seem to be espoused by most people, across time and culture. This is good news! A conversation about values is POSSIBLE – because we all share common ground.

On the other hand, this list of universal values is a really, really short list – things like honesty, respect, fairness, compassion – and therefore we should not assume too much commonality.

When we encounter a values conflict, first ask if it rises to the level of one of these core values to make sure that the conflict is not just a matter of personal style or preference or comfort...but rather that a true ethical principle is at stake. And then if the challenge DOES raise a core value, we can frame our approach to appeal to the core values that most others are likely to share.[1]

So, rather than framing a business ethics issue in terms that are likely to only be meaningful to ourselves, or to those who share our particular cultural or industry norms, we can talk, for example,

about the potential impacts of the decision on others – customers, employees, the community – and in this way implicitly appeal to shared values.”

**For additional information, please contact:**

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This material is based upon the Giving Voice To Values curriculum ([www.GivingVoiceToValues.org](http://www.GivingVoiceToValues.org)). The Aspen Institute was founding partner, along with the Yale School of Management, and incubator for Giving Voice To Values (GVV). Now based and supported at Babson College.

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[1] Rushworth M. Kidder, *Moral Courage: Taking Action When Your Values Are Put To the Test* (New York: William Morrow, HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2005), 47